

UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE STRATEGY: A FIRST APPROXIMATION

Elements of a Strategy. Strategy is an outlook, an approach, to a given realm of endeavor, in this case national foreign intelligence. It is not a fixed doctrine. Strategy's object is to conceptualize a response to events, including principles which permit assessment of their relative importance, and selection of appropriate courses of action.

Strategy is thus the approach used in providing the intelligence required by policy makers in furtherance of national goals and objectives; it is not the formulation of those goals and objectives themselves. Included in an adequate strategy are means of assuring that the intelligence provided is obtained by means which are compatible with the national goals and objectives being served.

The function of strategy is to allot tasks, to coordinate the various forms of activity, and to allocate resources necessary to support them. Its aim is to fulfill the objectives established by national policy. Thus strategy is preeminently a means to an end.

Utility of an Articulated Intelligence Strategy. It may be argued that the United States has not heretofore had a consciously articulated national intelligence strategy. In the literal sense, this is probably so, although threads of such a strategy may be found woven throughout various policy and operational documents promulgated over the years.

There is also some question as to whether it is in fact feasible in the modern world to articulate a strategy in the classic sense. The pace of change, the press of daily events, and the reactive nature of much of what we do all work to frustrate the systematic prosecution of a coherent and comprehensive strategy.

But while it may be impossible to systematically execute a grand strategy, that is far from an argument for not having one. To the contrary, the more complicated and taxing the conditions of conflict, the more valuable is an overarching concept of one's aims and the means of achieving them. This is particularly true in the realm of intelligence, upon which so much else depends. An intelligence strategy, clearly articulated and generally understood and accepted, offers these among numerous advantages:

- + Formulation of the strategy requires conscious and systematic analysis and choice, not unconscious choice by chance or default.

- + An articulated strategy provides a touchstone for assessing the adequacy of resources devoted to fulfilling the strategy, and the risks and shortfalls associated with given levels of support.

- + A range of options is necessarily considered in the formulation and periodic reexamination of the strategy.

- + Conceptual guidance is provided for policy development and consideration of existing and proposed policies within the context of the overall strategy.

- + Examination of the compatibility of elements of the strategy with national goals and values is facilitated.

- + Underlying assumptions in the strategy are made explicit and therefore subjected to analysis and evaluation.

Strategy As the Act of Choosing. Formulation of a strategy in its essence entails choices. These include:

- + Choice of means: covert or overt collection, human resources, communications intercept using a variety of techniques, and the like.

- + Choice of mode: aggressive collection involving willingness to risk loss of assets, absorb high costs, bring pressure to bear on allies and neutrals; or a passive mode involving preference for overt/open source collection, minimization of costs, willingness to accept the risk to national security and interests of a low level of activity; or some

mid-range program balancing costs and risks at a tolerable level for each.

+ Choice of priorities: strategic intelligence, military intelligence, intelligence relating to given nations or regions such as the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe, indications and warning intelligence, and so on.

+ Choice of resource allocation: research and development, procurement, operating expenses; and to various means such as imagery, human resources, or communications intercept.

The De Facto United States Intelligence Strategy: While, as has been observed, it may be literally correct to state that in the past we have had no systematically articulated intelligence strategy, we have had a de facto strategy. To a large extent what we have chosen (consciously or unconsciously) to do has been governed by what technology has made it possible to do. This is more than gadgeteering, of course; the advent of significant new technology changes the environment, not least by the prospect of one's adversaries acquiring the capability, forcing adaptation on our part. A tentative tabulation of the elements of our strategy includes the following:

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An Intelligence Strategy for the Future. Grand strategies tend to be evolutionary in nature. Our intelligence strategy for the future will build upon and extend the de facto strategy of years past. Changes will be brought about by degree, especially given the heavy investment

in expensive technology and the long lead times associated with it that characterize our current way of doing business. The present sketch of some central elements of an intelligence strategy should be viewed as work in progress toward development of a more comprehensive and useful United States intelligence strategy. In a real sense that development will be a never-ending task.